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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 000483

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/I

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/22/2020
TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM IZ
SUBJECT: PRT MUTHANNA: DE-BA'ATHIFICATION AS POLITICAL
SPORT THREATENS GOVERNMENT JOBS AND ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 397
    ¶B. BAGHDAD 395
    ¶C. 10 BAGHDAD 415
    ¶D. 10 BAGHDAD 410
    ¶E. 08 BAGHDAD 4075

Classified By: PRT Team Leader John Kuschner for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d
).

¶1.   (U) This is a PRT Muthanna reporting cable.

¶2.   (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: Anti-Ba'athist sentiment is
now the political weapon of choice in Muthanna. The
Provincial Council recently enacted a law to purge all civil
servants who might have been associated with the banned
party, even if only for employment purposes. If enforced,
the legislation would adversely affect the functioning of
many provincial offices. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

DE-BA'ATHIFICATION TO INCLUDE CIVIL SERVANTS

¶3.   (SBU) A number of leading political parties are using
the de-Ba'athification question as a parliamentary election
issue in Muthanna. On February 9, Governor Ibrahim Salman
al-Mayali (Da'wa/State of Law Alliance-SLA) rallied more than
a hundred protesters in Samawah to demonstrate in favor of
Ba'athist exclusion from the election. More recently, five
Provincial Council (PC) members (two Sadrists, two from the
SLA, and one from the Iraq National Alliance/INA aligned with
the Zayadi tribe locally) called on the Governorate Election
Office (GEO) to purge any Ba'athists from the thousands of
poll workers hired for Election Day. At a private meeting
with the PRT on February 15, GEO Director Mutamed Namaa
largely rejected that call noting that he does not work for
the PC and he could not investigate the several thousand poll
workers prior to Election Day.

¶4.   (C) The PC went a step further in an emergency session
on February 14 by enacting a law to eliminate former Ba'ath
party members from all provincial government departments.
The law directed all government offices in Muthanna to
provide the provincial de-Ba'athification commission lists of
employees, job titles, addresses, and salaries to aid in the
investigation. Although the legislation empowers the
commission to make exclusion determinations, the membership,
authority, and operation of the commission are not delineated
in the text of the law. This follows other similar
provincial-level de-Ba'athification efforts in Baghdad (Ref
A), Karbala (Ref B), Wasit (Ref C), and elsewhere (Ref D).

¶5.   (C) The PC Chairman, Lateef Hassan Al Hassani (ISCI),
told PRT LES that he was concerned about the legislation's
implementation. Hassani collected enough PC member signatures
to have the legislation reconsidered. He pointed out that
the law was overbroad and "very extreme." He especially
worried that too many people working in the security forces,
Muthanna University, judiciary, and other key governmental

departments would lose their jobs. PRT LES attended the next
full PC meeting on February 16, at which Hassani stated, "We
all do not want the Ba'ath to return to Iraq, but at the same
time there are many Ba'athists who have proved their honesty
and faithfulness to the New Iraq." The Sadrist and SLA PC
members immediately challenged his position. The controversy
abated only after Hassani referred the draft to the Legal
Committee for review. Later, he privately told PRT LES that
if it is not killed in committee, he will try to block the
legislation by not signing it.

¶6.   (C) COMMENT: It is an open question as to whether
Hassani's strategy will be effective, but the issue is far
from settled. The new provincial law directing the
de-Ba'athification of the civil service is of great concern
Qde-Ba'athification of the civil service is of great concern
to the PRT. Although more reasonable voices, such as PC
Chairman Hassani, are calling for calm, others, such as
Governor Mayali, are using the issue to incite passions among
the populace and as a political issue. (NOTE: The Governor
is not running for a parliamentary seat. He serves as a
local SLA leader. END NOTE.) De-Ba'athification as a
political strategy is exposing a rift between two leaders who
walk in lockstep on most major policy issues. Even though
the province is almost entirely Shi'a, many of the older
technocrats in Muthanna's civil service belonged to the
Ba'ath party for employment purposes. Removing them via this
witch hunt would not only harm institutional knowledge in
local directorates, but also significantly degrade the
already tenuous technical capabilities of the province. END
COMMENT.

FORD